

Is there a need for the Green party?

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Body

Yes Only Greens will take required bold action

We are in a climate emergency. And Canada is failing to do its fair share in reducing climate pollution.

The country needs a party that understands that climate impacts every aspect of our lives; that urgent and bold action is needed to tackle the climate crisis.

The solutions aren't always easy, but they are clear. By being honest about the challenge and pushing for urgent action, Greens are working hard for a better future.

Failure to act urgently threatens our climate and economy. Yet other parties offer at best only half measures that will not address the emergency we are in.

Green Parties across Canada continue to put forward evidence-based solutions that will help us reach our net-zero emission targets and lead to a strong, green economy with new careers and better jobs.

Solutions that will improve health. The World Health Organization recently stated that climate change is the single-biggest health threat facing humanity.

Solutions that mitigate rising costs from increasing floods, fires and extreme storms. The infrastructure costs from climate change are projected to be tens of billions of dollars each year in Canada. These costs will only continue to rise unless we act now.

We need Green policies that build resilient communities and a better economy that grabs the opportunity for green innovations leading to new businesses and better jobs.

We need to take advantage of the \$26 trillion global clean economy that will bring tens of thousands of good jobs to Ontario.

Ontarians are resilient. And we can lead the way on climate action. We just need political leadership to get there - leadership that has not been there without the Green Party.

Around the world, Green voices are making a difference.

Whether it's in Scotland where Greens are currently in power through coalition; in Germany where Greens are the most popular party for voters under 30 and are well-positioned to hold power in a new coalition; or Prince Edward Island, where Greens are the official opposition.

Is there a need for the Green party?

In Ontario, Greens are offering concrete proposals on how to strengthen communities and our economy. Solutions like our "masterclass" housing strategy that tackles both the housing affordability and climate crises at the same time.

We've led the charge against Hwy 413 that would super charge sprawl and pave over acres of farmland and parts of the Greenbelt. We've passed the first Green legislation in Ontario history, to help electric vehicle drivers. During COVID-19, we successfully advocated for community gardens to re-open and for support for small businesses facing eviction.

Elected Greens matter. Although the federal Green Party - just like other parties - has had challenges recently, there is no question that Green MPs, MPPs and MLAs across Canada are making a difference.

While other parties are beginning to talk about climate, the status quo is to treat climate with half-measures and talking points. While other countries around the world embrace the green economy, invest in renewable energy, and move away from fossil fuels, Canada lags.

Other parties talk a big game on climate but then invest in new fossil fuel infrastructure like the Transmountain Pipeline and turn a blind eye to the destruction of old-growth forests like Fairy Creek.

The Ontario NDP released its self-proclaimed "boldest-ever" climate plan just two days after voting in favour of Doug Ford's motion to support pipelines. And the Ontario Liberals didn't bother to show up for the vote.

It matters that one Green MPP stood up for protecting the Great Lakes and offered Ontarians an alternative future where the province is not dependent on fossil fuels from other jurisdictions.

We can't keep putting Band-Aids on a gushing pipe.

Greens are the only ones willing to take the bold action needed to address the enormous threat we face.

And to turn this threat into an opportunity to transition how we live for the better.

It's an opportunity to rethink our communities to be more livable, affordable, connected, healthy and sustainable.

Since climate affects everything, we need to look at policy issues through the climate lens.

Whether that's housing affordability, energy or mental health. Right now, Greens are the only party ready to have honest conversations about how we can take meaningful, urgent action while leaving no one behind.

That's why Greens matter.

Michael Schreiner is a Guelph MPP and the leader of the Green Party of Ontario.

No The Greens never had a purpose in Canada

Amid a 1983 missile crisis, the Green Party of the German Federal Republic - West Germany - won seats in parliament for the first time.

That year's election was framed by West Germany's decision, backed by all parliamentary parties, to deploy NATO's nuclear-armed Pershing II and cruise missiles in the country.

The plan had a consensus among the parties, but not with West Germans. Over one million joined disarmament protests opposing the deployment. For many, the decision risked Germany becoming a nuclear target and deepening the Cold War division of their country.

New parties are born when voters see a purpose for them. And in 1983, Germans elected a handful of Green MPs to fill a space other parties had created and left open. Almost 40 years later, the Canadian Greens have never found their opening.

Is there a need for the Green party?

Over the decades, support for the federal Greens has languished at around four per cent even as action on climate change has grown more important, and while Canadian governments fail to meet climate targets. Their best-ever showing, at almost seven per cent, was 13 years ago.

In this year's federal elections, the Greens received just two per cent voter support. The party is out of money, divided, dispirited and de facto leaderless.

But the existential question the Greens face isn't why their party crashed in 2021, but why it never launched. Not if Canadians no longer have a purpose for the Greens now, but why they never did.

The Greens face a clear problem, but one not easily solved. Unlike the German Greens in 1983, the Canadian Greens don't own any important political space. They lack a unique and compelling position, issue, idea or ideology in Canadian politics.

Greens are not the exclusive advocate for fighting climate change. Every party in Parliament professes its opposition to climate change. Each puts a climate plan in their platform and promises to cut emissions.

It's true those promises haven't been kept. Canada is the only G7 country with rising emissions and has failed to meet emissions target. Recent government-funded research says current strategies will cut emissions by only 16 per cent by 2030, not the 40 per cent promised by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. And subsidies to fossil fuel industries now top \$18 billion, according to an Environmental Defence report.

But Greens are bit players in the chorus of criticism, not an exclusive critic of government climate failures. Worse, they lack the stronger position of the New Democrats and Bloc Québécois to criticize the Liberals' performance or hold them to their promises.

Unlike the Greens, the NDP or BQ can leverage a balance of power, letting them extract occasional concessions from the government. Their MPs sit on Commons committees that influence the timing and content of legislation. In every Question Period they can probe and hold Liberal ministers to account. The NDP and BQ have the full tools of an opposition party and use them.

The Canadian Greens lack a distinctive ideology or articulated green consciousness to define themselves or uniquely explain what has brought us to a climate crisis. In fact, Greens commonly promote themselves as non-ideological - "neither right nor left," terms former leader Elizabeth May described as "something of an anachronism." And even across a broader policy range, Greens lack unique positions on important issues.

Both the Greens and NDP favour universal pharmacare and a dental plan. Both want to take profit out of long-term care. Both want to shift housing strategy away from financing private developers and toward nonmarket construction. Both support proportional representation.

After the policy overlaps are factored out, what remains unique to the Greens is a quirky approach to politics that constantly trips them up. In 2019, May spent days clarifying her statement that Green MPs could reopen the abortion debate. She said she would dump any Quebec separatist candidate then did nothing when one said "of course" he was. In 2021, the quirky approach turned toxic.

Trumped by their competitors and without a political space of their own, the federal Greens mostly bumped along on the personality of Elizabeth May. Leader personality is important to a party's success, but that only goes so far, and now Ms May is gone.

Unless they can create a unique reason why voters need them - or other parties make the mistake of giving them one - the Greens will continue in crisis or disappear altogether.

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